



Natural Resources in Latin America and the Caribbean

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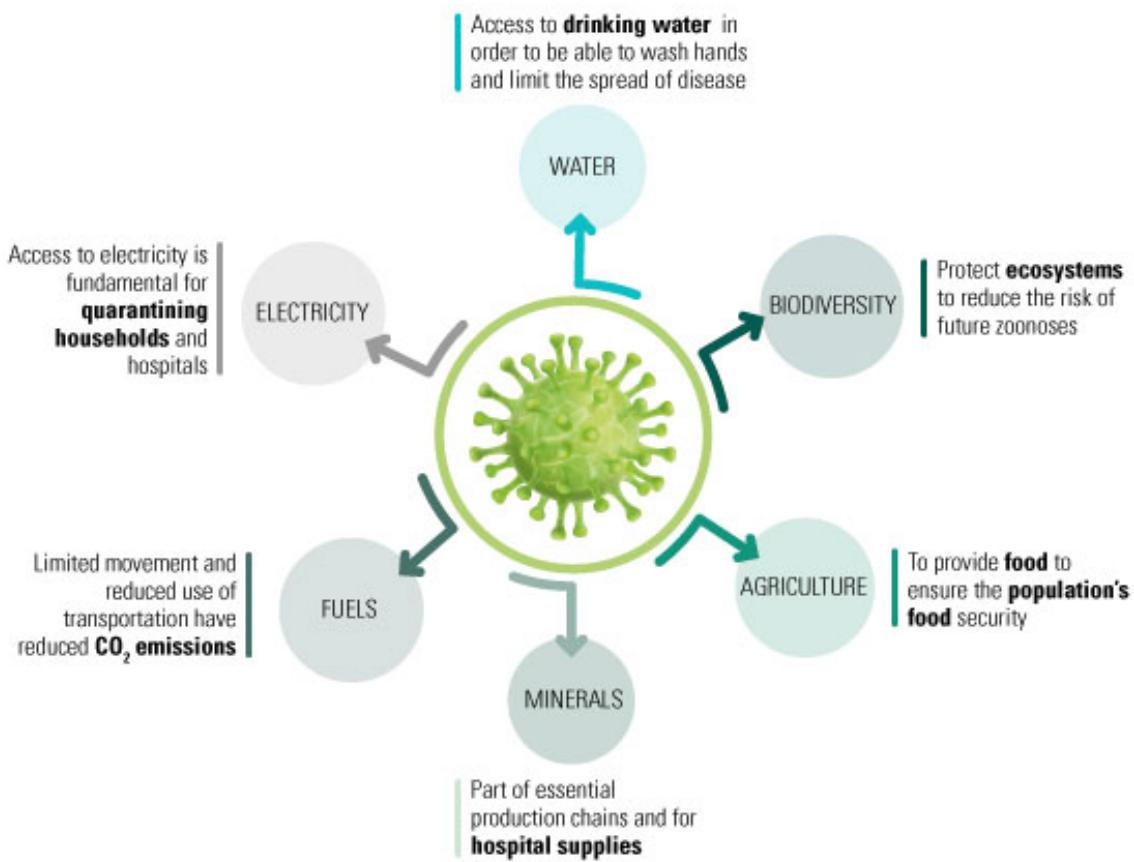
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Latin America and the Caribbean is a region that is highly dependent on natural resources, which play a key role in most of the region's economies. In recent months, the region has been hit by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has drawn attention to the important part played by natural resources and related services, such as drinking water, electricity and food, in fighting the virus. At the same time, the pandemic has curtailed numerous natural resource activities and highlighted the inequality in access to those resources and the income they generate.

This first issue of the *Bulletin on Natural Resources in Latin America and the Caribbean*, prepared by the Natural Resources Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), contains an analytical overview of the role played by water, electricity, agriculture, biodiversity and non-renewable natural resources during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a view to putting forward comprehensive proposals that might help the countries in the region improve their response to this and future crises, and address structural difficulties.

Based on the impacts of COVID-19, this bulletin identifies the need to bolster the role of the State in guaranteeing access to water, electricity and food for vulnerable segments of the population. At the same time, it underscores the importance of keeping essential chains of activities related to the use of natural resources up and running, while safeguarding the health of the workers and communities involved. It is likewise essential to maintain the diversity of ecosystems, preserve their natural boundaries, and avoid the fragmentation, degradation, and destruction of the region's natural habitats.

Main article



The part played by natural resources in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic in Latin America and the Caribbean

A. Comprehensive analysis of the implications of COVID-19 for natural resources in Latin America and the Caribbean

The COVID-19 pandemic has had enormous social and economic impacts on the region and across the globe. The direct consequences of the measures adopted by governments in the region to restrict movement are widely acknowledged, but no in-depth exploration has yet been conducted of the key relationships between natural resources and precursors, the spread of infection and the impacts of the disease itself. There is a very diverse set of relationships between natural resources and the COVID-19 pandemic (see diagram 1).

On the one hand, these resources (food, safe water, biodiversity and electricity) are vital for controlling the crisis; on the other, they are affected by the consequences of the crisis (the use made of fuels and minerals, for example). Access to drinking water is vital given that washing hands is one of the main steps that can be taken to avoid the spread of the disease; sources of power, including electricity, are essential to guarantee water supply and other conditions that make homes inhabitable, as well as to keep hospitals operational; agriculture underpins food security; and, lastly, non-renewable natural resources are of great macroeconomic importance in most Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Lockdown measures have triggered a temporary and steady decline in the use of fuels and, hence, in the emissions and contamination derived from them, as well as in the mining of those resources. COVID-19 is a zoonotic disease (that is one that can spread from animals to humans), but it has spread very easily from one human being to another because of overcrowding and the close connectivity built into our social structures. One of the problems with zoonotic diseases that has so far received relatively little attention is that natural barriers to them continue to be pushed back, as the ecosystems capable of controlling the spread of diseases continue to be fragmented, degraded, and destroyed. All studies exploring the reasons for the spread of zoonotic diseases identify land-use change as the principal cause (Gottdenker and others, 2014). The five leading factors are: land-use changes (fragmentation and degradation of ecosystems); food industry changes; human susceptibility; and international connectivity (travel) (Suzán, 2020). A high level of species diversity, which is a characteristic of healthy ecosystems, regulates the population of those species that act as primary reservoirs of viruses, thereby curtailing the transmission of pathogens. The evidence indicates that conserving biodiversity and its ecosystem services is necessary to protect human health both directly and indirectly.

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Activities



Webinar on Public Investment Planning with a Water-Energy-Food (WEF) Nexus Approach

June 2020. Santiago, Chile

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Fourth Regional Technical Forum of Energy Planners (First Virtual Forum): Supporting understanding among planners in the region

June 2020. Santiago, Chile

[See more](#)

More activities

June 2020

Webinar on the mining industry in the face of the COVID-19 crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean

May 2020

Webinar 3 on SDG indicator 6.5.2: supporting countries in preparing national reports for the second reporting exercise, organized by United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

April 2020

Tenth regional webinar on experiences in the construction of environmental indicators for SDG 6

March 2020

ECLAC participation in the Regional Workshop on using SDG 6 Policy Support System (SDG-PSS) to facilitate countries in Latin America and the Caribbean for water-related sustainable development

January 2020

Panel discussion on the challenges and opportunities to improve water management in Chile"

January 2020

Third Nexus Virtual Forum. Integrated Watershed Management under a Nexus Perspective

Highlighted publications



Estudio de caso sobre la gobernanza del cobre en el Perú

103 p. | June 2020

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Estudio de caso sobre la gobernanza del litio en Chile

101 p. | June 2020

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Estudio sobre los efectos de la minería en el desarrollo económico, social y ambiental del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia

63 p. | June 2020

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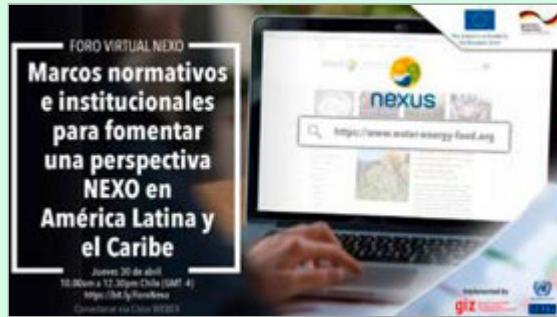
News



Fourth Regional Technical Forum of Energy Planners ends

June 2020. Santiago, Chile

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Successful Fourth Nexus Virtual Forum. Regulatory and institutional frameworks to promote a Nexus perspective in Latin America and the Caribbean

April 2020. Santiago, Chile

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